

Date of Hearing: March 4, 2025

Jo Shifrin
Bethesda, MD 20817

TESTIMONY ON HB 1198 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

**Correctional Services - Comprehensive Rehabilitative Prerelease Services – Female
Incarcerated Individuals (The Monica Cooper Prerelease Act)**

TO: Chair Clinppinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Jo Shifrin

OPENING: My name is Jo Shifrin. I am a resident of District 16. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HBI 198, Correctional Services - Female Incarcerated Individuals (The Monica Cooper Prerelease Act).

I moved to Bethesda 10 years ago to be near my grandchildren. My support for this legislation comes from my grounding in Jewish values. Among these values are *Tikkun Olam*, an obligation to make the world a more fair and equitable place for people to live, and *Tzedek*, justice.

I believe that the way incarcerated women have been treated does not result in them being able to re-enter society as productive and stable members of the community. For years, incarcerated men have had pre-release facilities to be discharged to where they were given services and supports needed for successful reentry, recovery, and recidivism reduction. Incarcerated women have not had their own facility.

Incarcerated women need their own facility in which gender-responsive services are provided. These would include psychological services to support socialization, culture, deal with exposure to trauma, etc. They will be assisted with developing a comprehensive reentry plan to reduce barriers to obtain housing, jobs, education, health care, child care and child welfare, transportation, legal advocacy, and other needs.

They need services which will include medical treatment, trauma-informed counseling, mental health treatment, and substance use disorder treatment. They need to improve their education and upgrade their vocational skills. The facility would offer the opportunity to strengthen family and community relationships through extended family leave and parenting workshops. They would also be provided with family reunification assistance.

Upon release, these incarcerated women should have all the pertinent documents they need,, including a birth certificate, a social security card, health insurance information, a driver's license or state ID card.

I respectfully urge the Committee to return a favorable report on HB 1198.